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JOSE VIANNA DA MOTTA  
1868 - 1948

Side 1

1. LISZT: Eglogue (No. 7 of Swiss "Années de pèlerinage")
2. SCHUBERT-LISZT: Wohin?
3. SCHUBERT: Sonata, Op. 78, G Major: Movement 3 - Minuetto
4. BUSONI: Elegie No. 4 - "Turandots Frauengemach"
5. MOZART-BUSONI: Duetтино Concertante (with Mlle de Castello Lopes, piano 2)
6. CHOPIN: Polonaise, Op. 53, A-flat

Side 2

1. LISZT: Totentanz, with Portuguese National Symphony Orchestra conducted by Pedro de Freitas Branco (January 19, 1945)
2. DA MOTTA: Cantiga de Amor, Op. 9, No. 1
3. DA MOTTA: Chula - danse portugaise
4. DA MOTTA: Valse caprichosa

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JOSE VIANNA DA MOTTA

by  
Fernando Laieres  
and  
Joseph Moreno

Jose Vianna da Motta (1868-1948) was an artist whose interpretations were remarkably modern and prophetically forward-looking, both exploiting and, in certain respects, transcending a background that included studies with Xavier Scharwenka and Hans von Bülow. He had as well the distinction of being the last of Liszt's major pupils. Da Motta helped found the new tradition of piano playing which was to give us pianists like Arthur Schnabel and Edwin Fischer, who rejected Romantic excesses. Vianna da Motta's playing was a masterful, knowledgeable rendition of the composer's expressed intentions. That da Motta is today not better known outside of Portugal (he gave few performances after World War I outside his native land) is regrettable, and hopefully this reissue of da Motta's extremely rare recordings will help restore his art to currency.

Like most of history's great pianists, da Motta was a child prodigy. He began piano studies at the age of five, and gave his first public performance in Lisbon in 1881 at the age of 13. His program included the Chopin B<sup>b</sup> minor scherzo, the Mendelssohn Capriccio Brillante, Opus 22, some of his own compositions, as well as a performance of a Mendelssohn Trio, and he also conducted an orchestra in one of his own works. A remarkable achievement for a thirteen-year-old, and an early indication of the kind of artist he was to become.

Da Motta was a complete musician. In addition to his achievements as a brilliant soloist, he was an outstanding and devoted interpreter of chamber music, performing often with artists of the stature of Sarasate and Ysaye. Throughout his long life, he distinguished himself as a conductor, composer, teacher, author, editor and arranger, and was



known to be a man of broad culture, whose erudition extended well beyond the field of music. In our age of ultra-specialization, such richly endowed musicians are a rare commodity.

Sophie Menter (the favorite of Liszt's female pupils) was performing in Lisbon in 1882, and heard da Motta at the age of 14, when he had already completed his studies at the Lisbon Conservatory. She encouraged da Motta to go to Berlin to continue studies with Scharwenka, which he did, beginning that same year. He was a pupil in Liszt's master classes in Weimar in 1885, and also studied extensively with von Bülow. Da Motta began to establish his growing reputation in Berlin during the period from 1885 until the outbreak of the First World War.

Ferruccio Busoni and Vianna da Motta were the greatest of friends. Together they collaborated on various projects and editions, and the two appeared in several two-piano recitals in Berlin. Da Motta was often the soloist under Busoni's baton at various orchestral concerts there between 1902 and 1909. The Italian Busoni and the Portuguese da Motta were leaders in the brilliant group of pianists who made Berlin their headquarters after the death of Liszt. This group included D'Albert, von Bülow, Carreño, Hambourg, Hofmann, Rachmaninoff, Rosenthal, Scharwenka, Schnabel and Scriabin. Da Motta's international reputation was becoming widespread at this time (although he was not as well known as his teachers), and he toured the United States in 1906.

As a man he was quiet and reserved, exacting and very neat, though he could become deeply involved with friends or colleagues on subjects which fascinated him -- Music, Poetry, Literature, Philosophy. He wrote numerous important articles in flawlessly beautiful German during his many years of residence in Berlin: these pieces reveal his personality; he wrote with power and without pretense. Above all, he admired what was human. His scholarship and his personal acquaintance with the brilliant men of his time are evident in his writings. In his book Vida de Liszt we read that Liszt told his master class students in Weimar that Chopin did not want the first part of his Polonaise in C# minor, Opus 26 no. 1, to be repeated by way of a da Capo at the end of the second part. Nevertheless, such a da Capo



is to be found in many editions.

The first hearing of this recording may come as a surprise to many listeners. With the foreknowledge that da Motta was a Liszt pupil, one might expect to hear a pianist of Romantic flamboyance, with many of that period's excesses. But contemporary accounts of his playing invariably refer to his serious and intellectual approach to performance. Although, as the performances on this recording will amply demonstrate, da Motta had a brilliantly refined technique, his conception was more attuned towards conveying the musical idea, rather than the display of virtuoso pianism. Da Motta's remarkably astute sense of formal construction, his exactness and tasteful ideas were the hallmarks that distinguished his playing from that of all other great pianists of his time.

In an interview once, da Motta was asked whether he favored the subjective or objective view of performance practice. He answered: "In order to answer your question well, I would have to write a book. Here I can only summarize my attitude towards a work which I am to play. I am not particularly a partisan of subjectivism or objectivism. A true objectivism (meaning the absolute relation of the composer's intention, without the slightest interference of the executant's personality) seems to me neither possible nor even desirable. If it were possible, there would be only one form of execution for each work. It would be useless to hear more than one artist in a given work who had the luck to possess this unique gift of "true" interpretation. It would be the death of all musical activity in the field of musical interpretation.

On the other hand, I don't agree with unlimited subjectivism, whose prototype was the great Anton Rubinstein. Inasmuch as this type of interpretation is more interesting than the so-called objectivism (for the multitudes, it's even more enthralling) the result of this criterion is that whoever may be the composer of whatever the work the artist executes, what you hear is always the artist and not the composer. This may be interesting but only when the artist possesses a temperament and a powerful personality, as Rubinstein did. Between the two extremes, however, there is a middle road that is respect the content of a work and the unmistakable intention of the composer, without abdicating your personality nor enslaving



it to the composer's wishes."

Although da Motta is remembered mainly for being a Liszt pupil, his highly organized and intellectual approach to performance is certainly more closely allied to that of von Bülow, with whom he also studied, and who, apparently, made a far greater impression on the young pianist than Liszt himself. Von Bülow was a pianist highly respected for his serious and musicianly approach, but contemporary audiences felt Bülow's playing lacked fire and spontaneity. The 20th century has seen a turnabout in musical values, so that playing which may have seemed pedantic in the 19th century would today be the only acceptable kind of interpretation. As a result, da Motta's conceptions sound remarkably up-to-date.

Da Motta had a great repertoire, although he specialized in Bach, Beethoven, Schubert (a generally neglected composer in the late 19th century), Chopin and Liszt. (Although da Motta was a close personal friend of Johannes Brahms, that composer's pieces did not figure prominently in the pianist's repertoire). Among da Motta's favorite pieces were the Chopin F Major Ballade, Liszt's transcription of themes from Auber's opera "Die Stumme von Portici" ("Tarantella di Bravura"), and Liszt's F minor Transcendental Etude. He was equally interested in such diverse composers as John Field, Valentin Alkan and de Falla. He performed the 32 Beethoven sonatas in a series of recitals in Lisbon in 1927, the same year that Arthur Schnabel first performed the whole cycle. In fact, in the same year da Motta performed all the Beethoven piano chamber music as well. Da Motta concertized to the end of his life: the performance of the Liszt Todentanz conducted by Pedro de Freitas Branco here presented took place in 1945, when da Motta was 77, and still shows extraordinary technical command. He played as an encore the Fourth Paganini-Liszt Etude, which unfortunately was not recorded.

Da Motta's compositions are not widely performed outside of Portugal, but he made a contribution in that he extended the Portuguese nationalist tradition through the use of Portuguese folk music in his symphonic as well as his piano works. Da Motta also wrote two books dealing with his studies with Liszt and von Bulow, both of which give his unique insights into the pedagogical and performance practices of two of the greatest 19th century pianists.



Da Motta was highly regarded as a teacher who was very meticulous with students and who encouraged them to study a wide repertoire. His most well-known student is the concert pianist Sequeira Costa, who founded the Vianna da Motta International Competition for Pianists, held in Lisbon. The first prize is \$4,000., and important engagements in Europe are guaranteed to the winners.

At the outbreak of the First World War, da Motta was forced to leave Berlin when Germany declared war on Portugal. He eventually returned to Portugal, where he assumed the directorship of the Conservatório Nacional in Lisbon in 1919, and continued to perform, as well as conduct, compose and teach. The Conservatorio was also his residence, where he lived in a wing of the building on the second floor. Shelves in the long entrance corridor were solid with books and scores. It was very impressive, a perfect ambience of study and steadfastness.

It was in this environment that Vianna da Motta lived and worked from 1919 until 1938. He retired at that time and lived with his daughter Inês, who is married to the noted Portuguese psychiatrist, Dr. Barahona Fernandes. Vianna da Motta died in their home in 1948.

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Jose Vianna da Motta,  
sein. Weiteren  
Erfolge, begrüßend,  
freundlichst  
F. Liszt  
September 85 - Weimar

An autograph from Liszt to his pupil Vianna da Motta, September, 1885.



# KONZERT-DIREKTION NORBERT SALTER

Am Nollendorfplatz 5 **Mozartsaal** Am Nollendorfplatz 5

Montag, den 9. November 1908,

abends 8 Uhr:

## 2. Kammermusik-Abend

der Herren

**José Vianna da Motta**

**Alfred Wittenberg**

**Anton Hekking**

unter freundlicher Mitwirkung des Herrn **Adolin Fermin** (Gesang).

### PROGRAMM.

1. **Trio D-moll, op. 63.** . . . . . *R. Schumann.*
  - a) Mit Energie und Leidenschaft.
  - b) Lebhaft, doch nicht zu rasch.
  - c) Langsam mit inniger Empfindung.
  - d) Mit Feuer.
2. **Lieder:** a) *Flieder* . . . . . *Francis Hendriks.*  
b) *Sonntag* . . . . . *Joh. Brahms*  
c) *Widmung* . . . . . *R. Schumann.*  
(Begleitung: **Otto Lindemann.**)
3. **Trio B-dur, op. 99.** . . . . . *F. Schubert.*

Allegro moderato.	Scherzo — Allegro.
Andante un poco mosso.	Rondo, Allegro vivace.

Konzertflügel: **C. BECHSTEIN.**

*Während der Vorträge bleiben die Saaltüren geschlossen.*

Karten zu 3, 2 und 1 Mark sind in der Königlichen Hof-Musikalienhandlung von **Ed. Bote & G. Bock**, Leipzigerstr. 37, bei **Wertheim**, Leipzigerstr. 132-135 und Kantstr. 3, sowie täglich von 10—2 Uhr und abends an der Kasse des **Mozartsaales** zu haben.

### III. Kammermusik-Abend im Mozartsaal

am Freitag, den 4. Dezember 1908, abends 8 Uhr.

Programm: **Beethoven**, Trio D-dur, op. 70 No. 1. **Rubinstein**, Trio B-dur. — **Gesang.**  
Mitwirkung: **Arthur van Ewyk.**

Das verehrte Publikum wird höflichst gebeten, mit Beifallskundgebungen  
bis nach Beendigung der einzelnen Werke zu warten.



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## VIANNA DA MOTTA

by

Joao de Freitas Branco

The greatest Portuguese pianist of all times, Jose Vianna da Motta, was born on the S. Tome island, Africa, on April 22, 1868. He was four years old when he revealed his musical vocation, and after having completed his basic musical education at the Lisbon Conservatory, he was further supported in his studies in Berlin by King D. Fernando II.

Da Motta's activities centered in Berlin for more than thirty years. From there he embarked on many professional tours of Germany and abroad (France, Scandinavia, Russia, Britain, U.S.A., Brazil, Argentina), after having the honor of being taught by Liszt in Weimar, and by Hans von Bülow, about whose teaching he wrote important texts.

Vianna da Motta was the partner of many other celebrated virtuosos, among them the violinists Sarasate and Ysaye. With Ysaye he played in the U.S.; their interpretation of Beethoven's "Kreuzer" sonata was memorable.

He also collaborated with Ferruccio Busoni, one of his closest friends and most sincere admirers, who dedicated to him a set of piano transcriptions of Bach's organ choral preludes.

As a soloist, Vianna da Motta displayed a superlative stylistic and technical mastery. Intelligence, knowledge and technical skill were perfectly balanced in his performances, which could attain a monumental greatness or a most delicate expressiveness, without indulging in banal sentimentality. His playing was clear, his sonorities limpid and colored; the elevation of his interpretations reflected his deep worship of Goethe, whose works he knew better than many a specialist in literature.

Vianna da Motta, whose repertoire was enormous, certainly distinguished himself as one of the very finest Bach,



Beethoven and Liszt interpreters. When, in 1927, he returned to Germany to take part in the commemoration of the centenary of Beethoven's death, a German critic hailed him as one of the last representatives of the genuine Beethovenian interpretation. But he was also magnificent in other music. His interpretation of Falla's "Noches en los jardines de Espana," for example, met with the warmest reception from public and critics alike whenever he played that music in Spain.

World War I forced Vianna da Motta to leave Germany. His reputation of being one of the best piano teachers in Europe led him to the class of virtuosity in the Conservatory of Geneva, Switzerland, the same class which Liszt had directed many years before. When peace made it possible to go back to Berlin, Vianna da Motta chose another path, accepting the charge of director of the Lisbon Conservatory and giving up his brilliant international career for the sake of improvement in Portuguese musical education.

He stayed as director of the Conservatory until he reached the maximum legal age limit, in 1938. As a reformer he did everything he could in order to bring didactic programmes and methods closer to those of the excellent schools he had known abroad. His directorship was an important contribution to the rise of a new generation of more cultivated Portuguese musicians. On the other hand, his own activity as a teacher brought about a remarkable quantity of good pianists, among them Sequeira Costa.

Although he was not nearly so distinguished a composer as a pianist and piano teacher, Vianna da Motta must be mentioned in that capacity too. He tried to give more consistency to Portuguese nationalistic music, based on folk songs and dances, and expressing patriotic sentiments. His Sinfonia "A Patria", evocative of Camoens' The Lusiads and showing considerable influence of Liszt and Wagner, is probably the first Portuguese symphony conceived in post-Beethovenian terms.

Vianna da Motta wrote many criticisms and papers in Germany and Portugal. He wrote for several important German publications, among them the "Bayreuther Blätter." Two books by him appeared in Portugal: "Musica e Musicos Alemaes" ("German Music and Musicians") and a biography of Liszt.



He died on June 1, 1948, in Lisbon, being, after the death of Lamond on February 21 of the same year, the last survivor among Liszt's outstanding disciples.

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LETTER FROM HANS VON BÜLOW

(Translated by Edward Weiss)

Hamburg, November 10, 1891

To Jose Vianna da Motta (Berlin)

Esteemed Sir:

I regret very much that for the last two years poor health has prevented me from revising -- or re-revising -- the A Major Concerto of Field. I would naturally have placed it at your disposal with great pleasure. It seems to me that you could present the work in the original form. Otherwise, I would like to suggest that you try to persuade Professor Klindworth, who is much more capable than I am to solve this problem, to take over this work.

Recently returned from Berlin, I find myself again in such a deplorable condition that I am unable to go further into the interesting project which you have mentioned; therefore I suggest another, if it would be commendable, that is to follow the appeal of Professor Dr. Carl Reinecke to again cultivate the piano concerti of Mozart. The new, in the best sense, is actually only the forgotten past. And I believe that the A Major, the G Major and the so-called Coronation Concerti would offer laudability and even more rewarding exercise for your pure and supple art of interpretation.

Hans von Bülow



Editor's Note: In 1895, Vianna da Motta was asked to add a supplementary chapter to Theodor Pfeiffer's book, "Studies with Hans von Bülow" covering the year 1887, which year Pfeiffer did not attend Bülow's Master Classes in Frankfurt. Following are some of da Motta's recollections of Bülow, translated from the original German of the supplement by Miss Adela Bay:

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HANS VON BÜLOW

by  
Jose Vianna da Motta

I met Bülow a number of times aside from the lessons at Steyl and Thomas, and on those occasions would listen, enchanted, to his incomparable conversation bubbling with wit. It was like a delicious side dish, in which all the captivating kindness of his generous nature was manifest.

Concerning Liszt's Etudes, "Gnomenreigen" and "Feux Folets," Bülow said: "I wish this gifted master had created more such works of art, each as polished and perfect as any of Mendelssohn's Songs Without Words. One does Liszt an injustice as a composer if one is acquainted only with his extravaganzas, the symphonic poems." (As if even these were so well known! That is precisely the problem -- nowhere are they being played. Would the musical world support Bülow's judgement in this matter if they were?)

No written word can ever replace a spoken one -- and with Bulow, everything spoke: the look, the gestures; one remembers his incomparable movements while conducting, which became a wonderfully eloquent commentary on the music. It is impossible to reproduce here with mere writing the lightning-like spontaneity of his visionary ideas. His spirit hovered in purer spheres high above the common swarm, and we students had difficulty following him there and we did not always understand him.

One day he presented a huge lecture concerning the decline of music. Unfortunately, it was impossible, without the assistance of a stenographer, to record with exactitude every observation, every witty thrust. I can only



offer, in a form much inferior to the original, this account of the highpoints of his inspired discourse:

"Aside from Brahms, the Germans have no significant composer. Rheinberger is a composer for the next century. Robert Fuchs composes quite nicely. The Russians are still too coarse. The Italians are ready. Only Buonamici and Sgambati warrant mention as real artists, at the moment. They could produce something in the buffo genre, if they took "Il Barbiere" as their starting point. How do things stand in Portugal?"

I explained to him how utterly deficient our system of musical education is, how musical life in Portugal is limited to Italian opera, and how until now our composers have been content to imitate the Italian model.

"Nothing is to be expected from the Romans, either" (he had nothing to say about the French). "In fact, if it weren't for this," (and he indicated here the recently published Opus 99 and 100 of Brahms) "one could pack up one's things and go to Australia."

About Verdi's "Otello": "Verdi had no desire to write operas with arias and duets, but rather just a little"-- and he stressed the following words -- "à la Bayreuth. But can you find anything like this in Wagner?" And he showed me, in the piano score, the triad progressions at the end of the second act. "Not a bit! So I still prefer Rossini's "Otello," which is, at least, naive, natural, not so artificially forced."

He spoke with great respect about Spohr's operas, and expressed regret that they are so very underrated. He also liked Goetz' "Zahmung der Widerspanstigen" very much. Goetz had once been a student of his.

But upon being asked by some gentleman if he would be willing to look his compositions over, Bülow replied: "No sir, not on your life; Bach, Beethoven and Brahms: I don't care a rap about anyone else."

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### DISCOGRAPHY

Exact dates are not known for the recordings of Vianna da Motta. It is most likely that they were recorded in either 1928 or 1929. The commercial recordings were all made in France by Pathé-Marconi on a Gaveau piano.

<u>ISSUE NUMBER</u>	<u>SELECTION</u>	<u>MATRIX NUMBER</u>
X 5449	DA MOTTA: Cantiga de Amor, Part 1	N 8725-1
	DA MOTTA: Cantiga de Amor, Part 2	N 8726-1
X 5450	DA MOTTA: Chula - danse portugaise	N 8727-1
	DA MOTTA: Valse Caprichosa	N 8728-2
X 5451	LISZT: Eglogue - No. 7 of Swiss "Annees de pèlerinage"	N 8729-2
	BUSONI: Turandots Frauengemach	N 8730-1
X 5452	CHOPIN: Polonaise, Op. 53, Part 1	N 8731-2
	CHOPIN: Polonaise, Op. 53, Part 2	N 8732-1
X 5454	SCHUBERT: Sonata, Op. 78, G Major: Minuetto	N 8736-1
	SCHUBERT-LISZT: Wohin?	N 8737-1
X 5453	MOZART-BUSONI: Duetтино Concertante, Part 1	N 8738-2
	MOZART-BUSONI: Duetтино Concertante, Part 2	N 8739-2
	(with Mlle de Castello Lopes, piano 2)	

Missing matrices N 8733/4/5 are believed to belong to recordings of Vianna da Motta.

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LISZT: TOTENTANZ, with the Portuguese National Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Pedro de Freitas Branco - Recorded during a live performance, January 19, 1945.





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